

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 805

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 3333

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CDES, HO

SUBJECT: PRESS INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP OF OLANCHO

REF: LETTER FROM AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ TO LAZAR DATED JULY 25

SATURDAY EDITION AT TIEMPO CARRIES FRONT PAGE PHOTO OF OLANCHO BISHOP NICHOLAS DE ANTONIO, AMERICAN CITIZEN, AND HEADLINE IN WHICH HE CLAIMS THAT \$10,000 BOUNTY HAS BEEN OFFERED FOR HIS HEAD BY POWERFUL LANDHOLDERS AND CATTLEMEN IN THE AREA. WHILE THE BISHOP HAS MADE THESE DECLARATIONS IN PRIVATE, MISSION CONCERNED OVER BISHOP'S JUDGMENT IN GRANTING THIS TYPE OF INTERVIEW, MAKING THESE DECLARATIONS, ALLOWING THESE LARGE PHOTOS TO BE PUBLISHED AND IN GENERAL EXPOSING HIMSELF TO MANY TEMPTATIONS WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BE GENERATED BY SUCH PROVOCATIVE ANNOUNCEMENT. DURING RECENT VISIT TO AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE BISHOP DE ANTONIO SEEMED ALMOST TO TAKE AN UNHOLY PRIDE IN ALL OF THIS ATTENTION HE IS RECEIVING. AS PREVIOUSLY POINTED OUT BY EMBASSY, THE BISHOP SEEMS TO BE SINCERE ENOUGH, BUT APPARENTLY OBLIVIOUS OF THE DANGER TO WHICH HE IS EXPOSING HIMSELF AND HIS FLOCK BY HIS ZEAL FOR RETURNING TO THE OLANCHO AREA WITH THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF "HELPING TO TEACH THE CAMPESINOS THAT THEY ARE BETTER THAN THEIR MASTERS AND GOING TO THE POINT OF CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT IF NECESSARY,

EVEN THOUGH I AM A FOREIGNER ON HONDURAN SOIL". EMBASSY GREATLY CONCERNED THAT IF THE BISHOP'S OFT-QUOTED ZEAL AND WILLINGNESS TO
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HAVE PICTURES AND PRICES OF HIMSELF PUBLISHED THROUGHOUT THE

HONDURAN DAILIES AND THE MIAMI HERALD, HE MAY FIND MORE THAN
SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS WILLING TO INTERPRET ALL THIS AS A DEATH WISH
WHICH THEY COULD HAPPILY ACCOMMODATE FOR EVEN LESS THAN THE
GOING PRICE. CONSCIOUS OF THE NECESSITY FOR SEPARATING THE MATTERS
OF CHURCH AND STATE, EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO WATCH DEVELOPMENTS
AND WILL OFFER ADVICE ONLY WHEN ASKED, AS IN THE CASE OF THE
BISHOP'S LAST VISIT TO THIS OFFICE.
SANCHEZ

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